



National Transportation Safety Board

## The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, March 2, 2007

### **NTSB Determines Cause Of Bus Fire In Texas That Killed 23 During Hurricane Rita Evacuation**

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the cause of a fatal bus fire in Texas was insufficient lubrication in the right-side tag axle wheel bearing assembly of the motorcoach resulting in increased temperatures and subsequent failed wheel bearings, which led to ignition of the tire and a catastrophic fire. Global Limo, Inc. failed to conduct proper vehicle maintenance, to do pre-trip inspections, and to complete post-trip driver vehicle inspection reports, thereby allowing the insufficient wheel bearing lubrication to go undetected.

"We will not cease our efforts to push for change to prevent these kinds of accidents from occurring," said NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker. "However, unless there is adequate oversight, I am afraid we will continue to see motorcoach accidents that contribute to the unacceptable number of deaths on our nation's highway."

As a result of its investigation, the NTSB made recommendations to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the Motor Coach Industries, the United Motorcoach Association and American Bus Association, the Law Enforcement and Emergency Responders Associations. These recommendations include:

- Revising regulations to prohibit a commercial vehicle from operating with wheel seal or other hub lubrication leaks,
- Developing a standard to provide enhanced fire protection of the fuel system in areas of the motorcoaches and buses where the system may be exposed to the effects of a fire; and provide fire hardening of exterior fire-prone materials, such as those areas around wheel wells, to limit the potential for flame spread into motorcoach or bus passenger compartment,
- Developing detection systems to monitor the temperature of wheel well compartments in motorcoaches and buses to provide early warning of malfunctions that could lead to fires,
- Continuing to gather and evaluate information on the causes, frequency and severity of bus and motorcoach fires, and conduct ongoing analysis of the fire data to measure the effectiveness of the fire prevention and mitigation techniques identified and instituted as a result of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center fire safety analysis study,
- Revising product maintenance manuals to emphasize the importance of wheel bearing lubrication, specifically warning that daily inspection of hub oil levels and wheel seals is vital to prevent wheel bearing failure and that bypassing this requirement is a dangerous practice that can lead to a wheel fire or other serious consequences.



Source: Dallas County Sheriff's Dept

### **Vice Chairman Meets with Nigerian Minister of Aviation**

The Nigerian Minister of Aviation Femi Fani-Kayode; Director General Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, Dr. Harold Demuren; and other government officials visited the NTSB Headquarters on February 28, 2007.

The delegation met with Vice Chairman Sumwalt, and received an overview briefing of the agency by Dennis Jones (AS-20), and a tour of the Material and Audio Laboratories by Jim Wildey (RE-30) and Jim Cash (RE-40), respectively. Tom Jacky (AS-50) also assisted with the group's visit.

The Minister thanked the Vice Chairman for the agency's continuing support of accident investigations in Nigeria, training of personnel, and serving as a model for the reorganization of the Nigeria Accident Investigation Board. The Vice Chairman expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the cooperation the Nigerian government has extended to the agency. He also expressed optimism for the continuation of activities between the NTSB, Ministry of Aviation, and the NCAA and discussed their continued advocacy efforts for aviation safety.

The group was encouraged by the Vice Chairman's statement "turning tragedy to triumph" in response to the Minister's concern about the recent spate of accidents in the country. The Minister indicated that the government is strongly committed to addressing the aviation safety issues of the country, and maintaining a good relationship with the NTSB is a vital aspect of that initiative. The recent passage of legislation making the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority autonomous from political interference and independence from the Ministry is an example of this commitment.



## ***Member Higgins Addresses Members of the United States Power Squadrons***



Member Kitty Higgins addressed 900 members of the United States Power Squadrons (USPS) early Saturday morning, February 24, 2007, at their annual meeting held this year in Jacksonville, Florida. The USPS annual meeting is one of the largest – if not the largest – gathering of boating educators in the United States.

Member Higgins presented a special plaque of appreciation, on behalf of the Chairman and the Safety Board, to USPS Chief Commander Ernie Marshburn. The plaque recognized the support of USPS leaders and members in helping the States implement NTSB recommendations on recreational boater safety education and use of personal flotation devices by children.

Member Higgins, and Bill Gossard who attended the annual meeting, thanked USPS leaders and members for their strong support of three marine safety recommendations on the Board's Most Wanted List: mandatory recreational boating safety education; use of personal flotation devices by children; and safety instruction training for operators of rented personal watercraft. Member Higgins highlighted USPS' role in the recent success of a boating safety education initiative in the Virginia General Assembly, giving hope for boating safety education legislation in 2007.

## ***Organizational Phone Book Goes Live!***

NTSB staff may now view our Intranet phone listing sorted by Office, in addition to the previous alphabetical listing. To view the organizational phone book, go to the Internal web page, then to "Employee Resources," "Staff Directory," and click on "Sort by Division" at the top right. NTSB organizations and staff have been sorted by organization code. Office and Division leaders are highlighted for ease in finding the desired person or position. This feature will also provide an excellent resource for obtaining assistance by functions within the organization, when the exact name of an individual is not known. Updates to the directory will be made based upon "Hire Team" and "Separation Team" notices. Staff are encouraged to notify the Office of Administration when internal office or organizational transfers are anticipated. The Office of Administration would especially like to thank Ms. Mai Trang and Mr. Vince Giuliana of the Office of the Chief Information Officer for their outstanding support on this project.

## ***Did You Know?***

That the Board Members considered 187 notation items in calendar year 2006. The Executive Secretariat staff reports that this was a significant increase from the 129 notation items the Board considered in 2005. And the trend appears to be continuing - although we are only two months into 2007, the staff has already submitted 37 notation items for the Board's consideration!

## ***Runway Incursion Forum Announced***

The National Transportation Safety Board will hold a one-day forum on March 27, 2007, focusing on airport runway incursions and accidents, and potential safety solutions.

The Runway Safety Forum coincides with the 30th anniversary of the world's worst aviation accident - the runway collision in 1977 between two jumbo jets at Los Rodeos Airport, Tenerife, Canary Islands. The accident took the lives of 583 people on board two 747s, operated by Pan American World Airways and KLM. Capt. Robert Bragg, the Pan Am co-pilot that day, will recount his experiences at the forum.

The forum will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the NTSB Board Room and Conference Center, 429 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Washington, DC. Government agencies, the industry and the public are invited to attend. Registration is not required. A live and archived webcast of the forum will be available on the Board's website at [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).

"Eliminating runway incursions and collisions is a top priority of the Safety Board and has been on our Most Wanted List since 1990. The forum's goal is to rivet attention on the problem and review potential solutions," said NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker, who will preside over the forum.

The scope of the problem, how to avoid runway incursions, educational initiatives and new technologies are expected to be highlighted by panels representing the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, Flight Safety Foundation, Air Line Pilots Association International, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

The NTSB recommendation currently on the Most Wanted list urges the FAA to "require, at all airports with scheduled passenger service, a ground movement safety system that will prevent runway incursions; the system should provide a direct warning capability to flight crews. In addition, demonstrate through computer simulations or other means that the system will, in fact, prevent incursions."

"The NTSB has investigated several near collisions in the past few years that could have been catastrophic if it hadn't been for sharp-eyed flight crews and luck," Rosenker said.

One of the most recent investigations was a January 5, 2007, incident at Denver International Airport involving a Key Lime Air Metroliner and a Frontier A319. The Metroliner inadvertently entered a runway as the A319 was on short final to the same runway. The A319 crew saw the Metroliner as it descended out of clouds and executed a missed approach. The airplanes missed colliding by about 50 feet.